

**FORM B - BUILDING**

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

**AREA**

**FORM NO.**

F

513



own ACTON

address 64 School Street

Historic Name "Sunshine Villa"

Francis Hosmer

Use: Present residential

Original single family residential

**DESCRIPTION**

ate 1893

Source "Mill Corner" / Nylander notes

style Queen Anne

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric synthetic siding

Outbuildings 1-car garage/shed

Major Alterations (with dates) siding -

late 20thc.

Condition fair

Moved no Date n/a

Acreage 3.8 acres

Setting North side of mid to late 19th

century residential street. Mature setting

treed lot, set back from road

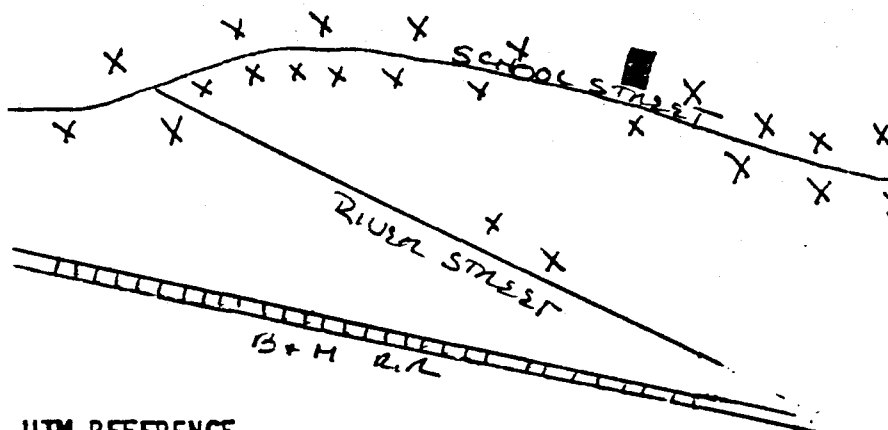
Recorded by Gretchen Schuler - ed. 1990  
Elizabeth S. Conant - 1988

Organization Acton Historical Commission

Date April 1990

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s).

Indicate north Assessor's Map # H-3A-2



UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE

## NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The property is eligible for National Register nomination as part of the School-River-Main Mill and Commercial Historic District for Criteria:

A - its association with the development of the railroad community from the 1840s with thriving mills and retail businesses on School, River and Main, as well as the owners and workers housing.

C - its representation of the Greek Revival and Italianate architecture most popular in developing the community of South Acton.

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE** Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

South Acton, once part of the 1000-acre farm granted to Concord's Major Simon Willard, was sold to Ephriam and Samuel Jones and Jonathan Knight in 1701. The first fulling mill was established and throughout the 18th and 19th century mill privileges on Fort Pond Brook, east of Main Street, were developed. South Acton became the first village center of Acton, preceding Acton Centre, which evolved around the Common, the Meeting House and school from 1806. With the advent of the Fitchburg Railroad in 1844 came the major growth of South Acton Village as an industrial village.

School Street, named for its association with the first three schools in the area, was laid out as early as 1703 and was the most direct route to nearby Concord. Most of the housing was built after the railroad was established with most of the more substantial mill owner housing on the north side of the street (facing south) and rental property for mill employees on the south side of the street which is steeply pitched with most lots going through to River Street.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Atlases/Maps: 1916 (Sanborn).  
Forbes, Nylander, "Mill Corner" (South Acton Village), 1989.  
Nylander, Robert., research notes.  
Phalen, History of Town of Acton, 1954.

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

ACTON

Form No:

F- 513

Property Name: 64 School Street

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION - 64 SCHOOL STREET

One of the only elaborate example of the Queen Anne style of architecture, Sunshine Villa, built in 1893 displays a gable-front with cross gable plan at its core with additional sheds and verandas that mask the traditional plan. The 2 1/2 story house, with a polygonal bay gabled front, has been covered with synthetic siding. A large brick chimney with a corbelled top extends above the roof of the main block at the ridge.

The porch wraps from cross gable to cross gable and has turned posts, with simply carved brackets, plain balusters and a 1-story projecting, octagonal turret with a finial top (similar to an attached gazebo). The foundation screening of the porch is lattice work set in wood framing articulating the contour of the porch. The main entrance is articulated by a small pediment in the roof of the porch and framed by the turned posts. Windows have 2/1 sash and only part of the original frames exposed due to the application of the synthetic siding. In the gable front, the first-story of the polygonal bay has oversized windows with vertical mullions creating window sash of 3/3. The polygonal bay is surmounted by a small pediment, which is the top of the gable front. Within this pediment is an unusual window in the shape of an inverted triangle.

On the west side the porch gazebo is the most prominent feature with a shed roof screened porch area and a projecting shed roof 1-story rear ell. The rake of the gable end is wide and unadorned.

## HISTORICAL STATEMENT - 64 SCHOOL STREET (continued)

One of the most pretentious houses in South Acton, Sunshine Villa, as owner Francis Hosmer named it, is also one of the few local examples of Queen Anne architecture with its irregular plan and use of fanciful forms. Although the house has been altered with the application of synthetic siding the intent of the whimsical architectural embellishment is perceived. Local resident Francis Hosmer (1836-1915) built this house for his retirement. Hosmer had been the owner of a prosperous ship chandlery and farm located near Route 2 and Hosmer Street. It is said that someone countered Hosmer's pretentious "Sunshine Villa" sign by labelling a local shack as "Moonshine Villa". While Hosmer is said to have been somewhat pompous, his wife, known to locals as "Aunt Gustie" looked after the welfare of others.

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